

Pennsylvania Squatters Rights: Adverse Possession and Removing Occupants

Summary for landlords and property managers. Last reviewed October 29, 2026. Full guide: <https://www.generationadvisory.com/laws/pennsylvania-squatters-rights>

Pennsylvania requires 21 years of possession before someone can claim land by adverse possession. A 2024 amendment made clear that the tenant notice to quit rules do not apply to a person who was never a tenant.

Key points

- A claim to land by adverse possession requires 21 years of actual, continuous, open and hostile possession.
- Because the notice to quit rules do not apply to someone who was never a tenant, an owner may go to police or file a court action without serving a tenant notice first.

Pennsylvania at a glance

Rule	Pennsylvania	Law
Adverse possession period	A claim to land by adverse possession requires 21 years of actual, continuous, open and hostile possession.	42 Pa.C.S. section 5530
How owners remove occupants	Because the notice to quit rules do not apply to someone who was never a tenant, an owner may go to police or file a court action without serving a tenant notice first.	Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951 (Act 88 of 2024)

Mistakes to avoid

- Waiting months to act after someone moves in.
- Changing locks or removing belongings yourself.
- Accepting rent or utility payments from the occupant.
- Leaving a vacant property unchecked for long stretches.

Verify current law

Laws named in this summary:

- 42 Pa.C.S. section 5530
- Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951 (Act 88 of 2024)
- Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951 and Pennsylvania Rules for Magisterial District Judges

- Pennsylvania case law and Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951

Official sources:

- Pennsylvania General Assembly: Unconsolidated Statutes, Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951: <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/US/HTM/1951/0/0020..HTM>
- Pennsylvania General Assembly: Consolidated Statutes: <https://www.palegis.us/statutes/consolidated>
- Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania: rules: <https://www.pacourts.us/>

General information, not legal advice. Check current law and talk to a Pennsylvania attorney before you act.
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